

BOOK REVIEW

BESSETTE, A.R. and A.E. BESSETTE. 1993. **Taming the Wild Mushroom, a Culinary Guide to Market Foraging.** (ISBN 292-70798-3, hbk.) University of Texas Press, P.O. Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819. (512) 471-4032. \$24.95. 144 pp., 95 color photographs.

The Bessettes have given us a book that in their words "...is an illustrated source book for identifying and preparing the dozen most common available cultivated and wild mushroom species sold in the market place. It is not intended as a field guide for identifying and picking wild mushrooms. We wrote it to enhance consumer awareness of the mushroom species available and to provide useful information about their selection, preservation, and preparation."

This book concentrates on 12 wild and cultivated species that are sometimes available in the marketplace. These species include the white button, a commonly cultivated mushroom (*Agaricus brunnescens*) the king bolete, a wild edible mushroom (*Boletus edulis*), oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*), chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*), morel (*Morchella esculenta*), paddystraw mushroom (*Volvariella volvacea*), wood ear (*Auricularia polytricha*), Shiitake (*Lentinula edodes*), enokitake (*Flammulina velutipes*), white matsutake (*Tricholoma magnivelare*), black truffle (*Tuber melanosporum*), and wine-cap stropharia (*Stropharia rugosannulata*). Some of these species are not readily available in the United States and are quite expensive such as the black truffle and must be imported from foreign countries.

This book is divided into four chapters: 1. Introduction; 2. Selecting, Preserving and Cooking Mushrooms; 3. Mushrooms in the Marketplace; 4. Beyond the Marketplace. It is written in nontechnical language for the general public. Topical headings under each of the 12 species introduce salient points such as other names, description, market availability, culinary aspects, and comments and this is followed by the mushroom recipes. The bulk of the book includes 57 mushroom recipes presented on a one-page format with about half of the page a recipe and half a finished dinner-plate photograph. The photographs are excellent and will tempt you to try stuffed mushroom caps, cream of mushroom soup, mushroom fritters, Chanterelle popovers, morel sauce, dragon's mist soup, tropical fruit salad, shiitake frittata, stir-fry beef with enokitake mushrooms, scallops and white matsutake with fennel, easy truffle cheese spread and truffle butter. Somewhere under each species should have been included the range of cost if sold by the pound as fresh produce or as a processed canned product. Some of the more highly prized mushrooms used in gourmet cooking such as the black truffle may be priced beyond the pocketbook of the general public.

Consumption of cultivated and wild edible mushrooms is becoming increasingly more popular in the United States. The mushroom as a food item is particularly beneficial because of its low sodium, fat, cholesterol, and calorie content. Several recipes could have been designed as dieter's choices or several added that were low in fat or sodium to appeal to a broader public.

There is a brief section on growing your own mushrooms with a list of companies that provide mushroom kits and information for growing mushrooms at home. Appendix A is a handy list of equivalent and substitutions for common ingredients; Appendix B is a conversion table from English units into metric units for volume, weight, and temperature. A list of recommended readings is provided that concentrates on more recent publications is available in hardback which makes it more costly at \$24.95 for 144 pages. Nevertheless, it should be in the kitchen of every gourmet cook who wants to impress guests with mushroom dish creations. Bon Appetit!—*Harold Keller.*